



## Switzerland's priorities for the 71st session of the UN General Assembly

Switzerland's long-term engagement in the United Nations (for the decade 2012–2022) focuses on the two main strategic areas of peace and international security, and the reform of the UN. The 2016–2019 foreign policy strategy forms a framework for the areas that Switzerland will focus on and prioritise at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The Swiss priorities also build on those of previous years. Continuity is important since Switzerland's overarching objectives, interests and values remain constant as well.

Switzerland has set the following priorities for the 71st session of the UNGA:

### Peace and security

Peace and security is one of the four strategic focuses of Switzerland's 2016–2019 foreign policy strategy. The UN plays a key role in this. Switzerland will build on its commitment to peace and security, lending significant impetus to a viable and just international order. It contributes to crisis and conflict management and helps to find common responses to global challenges such as violent extremism. Switzerland places its main focus on conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution, and continues to strengthen International Geneva as a centre for the promotion of peace.

The UN peace and security architecture has been submitted to a comprehensive review in three parallel processes. Switzerland hopes to use the momentum of these processes to establish its objectives more firmly in the UN's peace and security architecture, and will encourage the next Secretary-General to continue to ensure that the review results are implemented.

Switzerland is pursuing a number of objectives in these reform processes. It continues to push for the comprehensive expansion of the UN's political instruments. This primarily involves extending the UN's capacities in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and peace negotiation. Switzerland welcomes the UN's new 'sustaining peace' concept, which extends the focus to long-term and comprehensive engagements to achieve sustainable peace, and, above all, to strengthen the UN's prevention work. It continues its engagement in peacebuilding, in particular with regard to the high-level meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace to be held at the 72nd session of the UNGA. In conjunction with the Group of Friends of Sustaining Peace, recently initiated by Mexico, it is pushing for the effective implementation of the measures already decided on to strengthen peacebuilding, and would like to see the 'sustaining peace' concept firmly established in the UN system. In addition, Switzerland continues to advocate improvements in the backstopping and funding of Special Political Missions and greater participation of women in peace processes, for example by requesting the UN to ensure that women are more equally represented in decision-making bodies. Switzerland also continues to campaign for better protection of civilians by UN peace operations and for the firm implementation of a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse in such missions. At the coming UNGA session, the Secretary-General will present an implementation report on this matter, and Switzerland will closely follow the implementation in the respective bodies. Switzerland would also like to see closer partnerships with relevant regional organisations, especially greater cooperation between the UN and the OSCE.

Improving coherence and coordination in the UN system continues to be a prime objective. Switzerland would like to see human rights play a key role in UN conflict prevention activities. To this end, in June 2016 it launched the "appeal of 13 June" calling on the international community to strengthen cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in this area. So far (September 2016), 70 member states have supported this appeal. Switzerland will sustain its efforts in this matter during the 71st session of the UNGA.

Switzerland supports the search for effective measures to reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons. In cooperation with other states, it will again table a resolution on de-alerting nuclear

weapons. It is pushing for the follow-up process to the UN open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament set up by the 70th session of the UNGA to be made as inclusive as possible. And in the field of conventional weapons, Switzerland will continue to encourage the rapid and universal ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

A further priority is Switzerland's engagement in the fight against terrorism. Following the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism, jointly organised by the UN and Switzerland in the spring of 2016, and the fifth review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June 2016, Switzerland will continue to advocate a preventative approach. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen state structures founded on the rule of law, as well as the resilience of individuals and communities, for example by providing better vocational education for young people. Switzerland is also campaigning to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not undermine international humanitarian law and humanitarian efforts.

Switzerland continues to be active in the area of water, peace and security, and accompany the independent international panel on this topic it launched in 2015. A review is being conducted into how water governance can be promoted in the UN system. Switzerland also continues to support the global fight against corruption at the international level. Having successfully sponsored a resolution on the launch of the second review cycle at the 6th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, in the associated country reviews it is working to ensure that the terms of the Convention are effectively implemented.

### **Human rights**

Promoting human rights is a cornerstone of Swiss foreign policy. The UN is the organisation in which the human rights agenda is set multilaterally and at global level. Switzerland rejoined the Human Rights Council on 1 January 2016 (mandate period 2016–2018). It will foster efforts to strengthen the Human Rights Council and human rights throughout the UN system and continue to promote greater cooperation between the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. This is also in the interests of promoting International Geneva as the global centre of expertise in human rights.

The aims and principles of Switzerland's efforts to promote human rights within the UN are laid out in the Human Rights Strategy of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (2016–2019). In the coming session of the UNGA, the key issues for Switzerland will be: abolishing the death penalty, promoting the prevention of torture and more humane conditions of detention, women's rights, children's rights, the human rights of migrants, protecting minorities and human rights defenders, strengthening civil society, strengthening the human rights perspective in the fight against corruption, protecting privacy on the internet and human rights in political transitions.

Switzerland will continue its efforts to improve review mechanisms in the implementation of human rights. In particular, it will take an active part in interactive dialogues with special envoys. In the autumn of 2017, Switzerland will undergo its third country review under the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development and prosperity are one of the four strategic focuses of Switzerland's 2016–2019 foreign policy strategy. The 71st session of the UNGA will focus on the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the UN summit in September 2015. Having successfully influenced the catalogue of goals in the intergovernmental negotiations that took place between 2013 and 2015, in 2016 Switzerland has been one of the first countries ('early movers') to introduce measures to implement the 2030 Agenda. At the 71st session of the UNGA it will continue to promote its role in this area.

In the newly established High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the UNGA and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) address in particular the follow-up and review mechanism for the 2030 Agenda. Switzerland will continue to play a leading role in the conceptual development of this mechanism. It will also make further concrete recommendations regarding reform of the UN development system, so that the 2030 Agenda can be implemented

efficiently and coherently and tasks effectively distributed within the UN. By virtue of the large number and range of local players, Switzerland advocates exploiting the potential of Geneva as the ideal location to implement the 2030 Agenda.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the positive contribution of migrants for sustainable development was also recognised. Switzerland was able to successfully integrate migration aspects in the Sustainable Development Goals and will continue to be closely involved in discussions on the future way in which the migration issue is addressed in the UN system. Switzerland supports the organization of a high-level dialogue on migration and development to be held every four years. Switzerland will be looking closely at how the outcomes of the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016 are implemented, and what they mean for the UN system as a whole. For example, Switzerland would like to see greater coherence between the activities of the various players in the fields of humanitarian aid, development cooperation, the promotion of peace and human rights. Switzerland is in favour of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the principal organisation working in the field of migration, becoming part of the UN system. This would also promote the role of International Geneva, as many of the main UN organisations in the migration field are based there, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the context of Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Switzerland will press for an action-oriented, forward-looking agenda that complements the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement and other related processes and agreements. The Union of Swiss Cities will be closely involved in this process.

### **Humanitarian efforts**

Switzerland is committed to strengthening humanitarian aid, an area that is under huge pressure owing to the numerous conflicts and crises throughout the world. The current refugee crisis poses an unprecedented challenge to the actors in the UN system, pushing them to the limits of their operational and financial capabilities. Switzerland therefore continues its engagement to strengthen the UN bodies involved, such as the UN Refugee Agency.

Switzerland would like to see more efficient systems of aid and protection for people in need, and better coordination among the humanitarian actors. It also advocates improving coherence between humanitarian and development activities, for example conducting joint analyses and improving coordination on the ground, and involving to a greater extent the governments and people of the countries concerned.

Switzerland's engagement continues to focus on the key issues of protecting the civilian population, complying with international humanitarian law, respecting and observing humanitarian principles, ensuring humanitarian actors' access to those in need, and strengthening prevention and resilience. Having been closely involved in preparations for the May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, it will be paying particular attention to the implementation of the results, especially during negotiations on the humanitarian resolutions at the 71st session of the UNGA. Switzerland will also observe closely whether the member states deliver on the commitments made.

### **Budget and reforms**

Switzerland wants the UN to be a modern, efficient and effective organisation. In budget negotiations it calls for the UN to receive sufficient resources in order to effectively implement its mandates and for these resources to be employed as efficiently as possible. It advocates the modernisation of the UN administration and supports the further development and introduction of the new integrated resource planning system and the implementation of a comprehensive IT strategy. The reorganisation of the secretariat services announced by the Secretary-General – the Global Service Delivery Model – is of particular interest to Switzerland owing to its importance for International Geneva. Switzerland is also keen to see implementation of the reform of the salary and allowances system for internationally recruited staff. It will work to ensure that the reform projects that are

already under way, for example in the areas of human resources or institutional reforms, are continued under the next Secretary-General, that they are sustainable and that Geneva's position as a hub for the UN is further strengthened.

As a member of the ACT group (Accountability, Coherence and Transparency), Switzerland will continue to be involved in proposing improvements to the Security Council's working methods. The group will also work to ensure that the process for the election of the next Secretary-General is transparent and structured.

### **International Geneva**

Promoting International Geneva is a transversal aspect of Switzerland's UN policy. Switzerland strives to continue to strengthen Geneva's role as a centre of global governance and to ensure that expertise already present in the city is exploited in the UN's political processes. One project that is currently enjoying particular priority is the renovation of the Palais des Nations. Dubbed the Strategic Heritage Plan, this project will run for almost a decade (planning: 2014–2016; renovation work: 2017–2023) with a budget of CHF 836.5 million. At the 71st session of the UNGA, the Secretary-General will again present an annual progress report on the project, on the basis of which the member states will decide on the next steps. At the 70th session of the UNGA the green light was given to the renovation of the Palais des Nations and budget ceiling, scope and schedule were agreed; the 71st session will decide on unresolved funding issues so that renovation work can begin in 2017, as planned.

The WHO, ILO, ICRC, ITU and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are all major international organisations planning building and renovation work in Geneva. The Swiss parliament has already approved a long-term loan to the IFRC in March 2016 and is currently discussing granting long-term loans to the WHO, ILO, ICRC and ITU for their projects, which are of great significance to International Geneva and Switzerland.

The Secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in Geneva will also be a topic of discussion for Switzerland at the 71st session of the UNGA. The structure proposed by Switzerland having been agreed to in February 2016, the main task now is to operationalise the secretariat.